

I-5 – South 317th Street HOV Direct Access Project Update

Edition 14, December 7, 2004

In this issue: Construction Update / Nighttime I-5 Lane Closures / Increasing Carpool Lanes / Highway Advisory Radio Updates

Construction Update

Last week, crews placed steel and poured concrete for the foundation of the second bridge support to the right of the southbound lanes at S. 317th. We're still grading the southbound lanes, and we've finished crushing all the old pavement to use as a base under the new pavement. Workers continue building the retaining wall north of the bridge abutment on the right southbound shoulder.

We've started some improvements to existing pavement on both northbound and southbound I-5. This work requires the closure of up to three lanes of I-5 each night in the direction where the work is taking place (details below).

Sound Transit has completed 50% of the parking slab (floor) of the first level of the new transit center, just west of I-5 at S. 317th. They expect to complete the first floor parking slab before the end of the year, and in January they'll begin work on the second floor. The completed transit center will have five floors and 1200 parking spaces. It's scheduled to be complete in February 2006.

To view construction photos, visit
http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/I5/S317th_DirectAccess/photos.

Nighttime I-5 Lane Closures

Crews plan to close three lanes of northbound I-5 near S. 320th Street Tuesday and Wednesday nights this week. Up to three lanes of northbound or southbound I-5 could be closed Thursday night. Closures will begin at 6 p.m. each night, and all lanes will reopen by 5 a.m. each morning.

During these closures, crews are performing a relatively new type of pavement rehabilitation called "dowel bar retrofit." To extend the life of the 42-year-old pavement on I-5 near S. 320th, we're installing bars between the concrete pavement panels which will help ease the wear and tear caused by heavy vehicles. We'll provide more information about this process in next week's update.

Increasing Carpool Lanes

If you drive through Federal Way regularly, you may have noticed that the carpool lanes end at Military Road (the north end of our project area). So how can we build direct access ramps to link from the transit center to the carpool lanes, when there are no carpool lanes at S. 317th?

One of the improvements we'll make with this project is extending the carpool lanes from their current end at Military Road to south of S. 320th. This is just one place that we're adding carpool lanes – we're planning to extend carpool lanes all over the Puget Sound area, as shown in this map on our Web site: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/HOV/Projects.htm>.

Why do we build carpool lanes?

When traffic is congested carpool lanes carry far more people than an adjacent general-purpose lane of traffic. This helps everyone, including those who aren't sharing the ride, by reducing the number of cars on the freeway. For example, carpool lanes on I-5 in north Seattle carry twice as many people per lane as each of the adjacent lanes during rush hours. Traffic congestion would be much worse on I-5 if people who ride in carpools, vanpools or buses drove their own cars instead. Even when carpool lanes look less congested than general-purpose lanes they often are carrying more people. Our Web site (<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/HOV/default.htm>) offers more information about carpool lanes, including lane usage and travel time data for carpool lanes throughout the Puget Sound region.

Why carpool, vanpool or ride the bus?

People who carpool, vanpool or ride the bus help keep traffic moving and:

Save time. Commuters in the carpool lanes average 45 mph during rush hours, compared with the slow-moving general-purpose lanes.

Save money. Commuters who carpool, vanpool, or ride the bus save an average of \$3,000 a year on transportation costs, as compared to commuters who drive alone.

Experience less stress. When you don't have to drive, you can use your time to read a magazine, newspaper, or that book you've been dying to get to. You can have a pleasant conversation, or even catch up on some sleep – a much more relaxed commute than driving alone.

Highway Advisory Radio Updates

Make sure you catch our latest weekly radio message on **AM 1520** in Federal Way. Questions or comments? E-mail Laura Johnson at JohnsoL@wsdot.wa.gov.
